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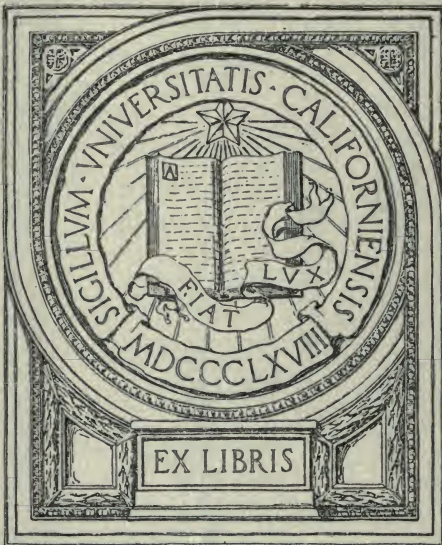
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Spiritual Evolution



AMANDA M. HICKS



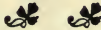
SPIRITUAL EVOLUTION

SIX STUDIES

By

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Berkeley, California



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For Reading:

The Gospel according to John.

For Memory:

John 15:1-17 John 17:20-26
Ephesians 3:14-21



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INTRODUCTION.



Evolution is defined by science as a process of systematic development by which things that are have come to be what they are.

Add to this Le Conte's definition, "Evolution is the Divine Method of Creation."

These studies in spiritual evolution are based on the axiomatic principles that "all forces of nature are forms of divine energy, and all laws of nature are regular modes of operation of divine energy, or will." Many men of science have thus far been content to limit the principle of evolution to physical and mental development.

We shall find a rich vein of thought opening to our minds if we follow the lead of some of the most profound men of science and philosophy of today who recognize that the principle of evolution includes also spiritual development.

This is the theme to which we are to give our attention in these studies.

FIRST STUDY.

SPIRITUAL HEREDITY.

Heredity in a biological sense is the name given to the generalization drawn from observed facts that plants and animals closely resemble their progenitors.

Men of science who have failed to extend the principle of evolution beyond the physical and mental have naturally failed to include spiritual heredity as a factor in human evolution.

That we may see this subject in its true perspective we turn to the prologue to St. John's Gospel and take as our starting point the time, the person and the work of the Word as set forth in John I, 1-14.

"In the beginning was the Word.

The Word was God.

All things were made through Him.

In Him was Life.

The Word became incarnate and dwelt among us."

One great purpose of the Word in coming to earth in the flesh as Jesus the Christ was to establish here and now a spiritual kingdom in which the will of God shall be done as it is done in heaven.

That man might know his true place in the divine order it was needful to make known God as a Father and every man as a possible son of God.

The Old Testament gives only glimpses of the truth that God is a father. Jesus came to reveal to man in its fulness the truth that God is "Our Father." He came not only to teach us this truth by word of mouth; He came to show us the Father. Having lived among men his life of perfect purity and love, of lowly service and sacrifice, he said in that wonderful upper room talk, "He that hath seen

me hath seen the Father." John 14:9.

The correlative of God as Father is man a son of God. Man's greatest privilege on earth is to be a child of God. Man's unique endowment, the power of choice; not absolute but relative. But even so this power is so far reaching, so wonderful that no one has yet sounded the possibilities it presents to the human soul. Man cannot choose whose child he shall be physically; cannot choose his physical parentage, hence cannot choose his physical heredity. But he can choose whose child he shall be in a spiritual sense, hence can choose his spiritual heredity, and so not only become a son of God but a partaker of the Divine nature as his birthright.

When Jesus came in the flesh to his own people they did not as a people receive him; but some did as individuals receive him and to these he gave power to become sons of God. Those who received him became sons of God by a process which is called birth. John 1:12-13.

Birth is not the beginning of life. It is transition into a larger sphere of life, a life of opportunities for growth and development that could not be known in the pre-natal state.

Much mystery has been thrown around the fact of a spiritual birth, and yet the conditions of spiritual birth have been set forth in words and by symbols that startle us by their simplicity. In each case we find either expressed or implied a divine invitation or command; a simple human act of choice, and a divine response, a Gift.

Here is a typical case. My sheep hear my voice. This is the call of the shepherd. They follow me.

This is an act of choice. I give to them eternal life, the divine gift. John 10:27-28.

The conditions of spiritual birth are like that. They are like opening a door in response to a knock, Rev. 3:20; like asking for and taking a drink of water, John 4:10; like eating offered bread, John 6:51; like accepting an invitation to a wedding feast, Mat. 22:1-5; like coming home from the "Far Country" to the Father's house, Luke 15:11-24; like chickens fleeing to the sheltering wings, Mat. 23:37; like taking an offered gift, "The Gift of God is eternal Life." Rom. 6:23. A gift cannot be given unless there is one with a will to receive it. God himself cannot bestow the gift of life which comes with the new birth, upon one who does not choose to receive it. Yet a little child may choose to take this gift. Our little ones need not go into the "Far Country" before they come to be at home in the Father's house; before they are born into the Father's family. "Suffer the little children to come to me. Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

Spiritual birth is set forth by Jesus as the one condition of entering the kingdom which he came to reveal upon earth. The fact of spiritual birth in individuals is to be known, not by a wordy profession, but by a life; known as the wind is known, by its effects; known as the life of the vine is known in the branches by their power to bear fruit. John 15:1-17.

Through spiritual birth man becomes not only a child of God and by heredity a partaker of the Father's nature; he becomes an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ. Rom. 8:16-17.

It is well at times to take account of our riches.

We become heirs to his peace, My peace I give to you, John 14:27; heirs to his joy, That they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves, John 17:13; heirs to his continued work of bringing in the kingdom by means of his continued presence and power, Mat. 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8; heirs to his abundant life, John 10:10; heirs to likeness to God through sonship, I John 3:2; "Beloved, now are we children of God and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that if he shall be manifested we shall be like him."

To stop here in counting our riches would be to do injustice to a vital principle in the life and teachings of Jesus, the principle of self sacrifice. We fail if we too constantly picture the Christian life as a child's holiday. We started with Paul, but thus far have failed to follow to the limit that stern old warrior who counted not his own life dear unto himself, and who in declaring that we shall be children of God and joint heirs with Christ adds this significant clause as a condition, "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him."

SECOND STUDY.

SPIRITUAL ENVIRONMENT AND SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST.

The word environment in its simplest sense means surroundings. Used in this sense there may be an environment of relationship or an environment of proximity without relationship. A dry seed surrounded by air is in proximity to the air, but unrelated to that environment. The living leaf is related to the surrounding air by its power to take in through

pores the CO_2 and so help in building the living tissues of the plant.

Spencer says, "Whatever power an organism expends in any shape is the equivalent of power taken in from without." We all know how important is the influence of surroundings in bringing to perfection plants and lower animals, and in modifying the physical and mental development of human beings.

In physical life, which seems to be more essential, the organism or the environment? We shall find that each is helpless without the other. Air, light, heat, electricity, soil and water without an organism through which to manifest themselves would be only chemical elements and natural forces; would not be plant, would not be lower animal, would not be physical man. And an organism, plant, or animal, without an environment of chemical elements and physical forces, could it exist?

But man, the goal of the animal series, is mind as well as body. Without human environment from infancy, if indeed he could exist, what would he be? Suppose him to be brought up from birth by a family of monkeys, could he speak? Would he walk on all fours? What of his intellectual development? Man needs for normal mind development an environment of human beings; of plant and animal life; of land and sea; of sky and sun and stars; of books and teachers; of art and music.

Through developed intellect and scientific discoveries and mechanical devices man adds a universe to his environment and multiplies his physical power almost without limit. His unceasing effort is to further enlarge his thought environment and further increase his physical power.

But man is not only body and mind. He is spirit,—that “Something” within, which knows instinctively, unless it has become petrified by neglect or false teachings, that back of the flower is the maker of the flower; beyond the star is the maker of the star, and that physical death does not end all.

There was an old idea of a God who created the universe all at once, wound it up as one winds a clock, then left it to run itself,—an absentee God. The later idea, not yet universal, is of a God imminent, resident in nature, shaping with infinite skill the buds and blossoms of today, controlling all things by divine law, upholding all things by divine power. John 5:17. The environment of every human soul is God. “In him we live and move and have our being.” The whole universe is a whispering gallery in which God is sending out his wireless messages in every direction, but only he who keeps his soul attuned to the divine call receives the message. Man has the power of choice to respond or not to respond to his divine environment. It may be to him only an environment of proximity and not of relationship. “Their ears are dull of hearing and their eyes have they closed.” The response of a soul to spiritual environment is spiritual life, which is the Gift of God at the new birth. This is the topic for our third study.

THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST.

Another factor in evolution advanced by scientists is “The Survival of the Fittest.” Yet even science is now discrediting its own terms, for in the evolution of plant and lower animal the strong survive and the weak perish, and the strong are not always the most fit.

In the lower forms of life there is, if any, only very little power of choice on the part of the organism. As we ascend to the plane of human evolution we find a new factor in action, the conscious voluntary co-operation of the thing evolving, in the process of its own evolution. Man, endowed as he is with the power of choice, is capable of responding to the attractive force of ideals.

Every human being whether high or low in the scale of development has moments when he sees in flashlight a better self than he is. He feels within himself the *draw* to ascend to the plane of divine life and divine law, and he feels the counter *urge* to follow the line of least resistance and descend to the level of the beast; to the law of the jungle, the law of claw and tooth. This is the new problem in the man plane of evolution. Not shall the physically fit individual survive and the unfit perish; but shall the fittest *in each individual* survive and the unfit perish? Shall his best ideals, his finest visions, his noblest self survive and become permanent; or shall these die and the unfit survive and become permanent?

Here is the fierce battleground of life, the place where character is made, where the virility of manhood is tested. This is the field of destiny. Each man must make choice at every step of the way.

Some think the battle is done when the soul is born into the spiritual kingdom, but in truth the fight is then only begun. The choice to open the door of life to God is one great victory, but it stands at the beginning and not at the end of the Christian life. Paul won his first victory on the road to Damascus and could say boldly, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." Acts 26:19. Twenty years later,

after he had preached the gospel in Asia Minor and Macedonia and Greece and won untold numbers to Christ, he wrote to the converts in Corinth, "I buffet my body and bring it into subjection, lest after I have preached to others I myself should be rejected,—should become a castaway." I Cor. 9:27. Later still he wrote to the disciples in Rome, "I find then a law that to me who would do good, evil is present." Read the whole account in Romans 7:14-24 and note the agony of a tempted soul as he cries out, "Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?"

Fortunately for Paul he saw his danger and knew the one source of strength that would give him the victory. "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Here we turn with joy to the ever present Christ who in the days when he dwelt in the flesh was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin, Heb. 4:15, and in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted he is able to succor them that are tempted. Heb. 2:18. Only by his help shall the fittest in each soul survive and the unfit die.

But to the soul that aspires to highest attainments in the spiritual life the choice is not always between that which is morally good and that which is positively evil. Far more often the choice is between the good and the better; between the better and the best. The ground that produced thirty fold is called good ground. So of the ground that brought sixty fold. But there was ground that produced one hundred fold.

It is unfit that any child of God should be content with less than the best when power is at hand to give him the best.

**"God gives his best gifts to the few
Who dare to stand the test;
He gives his second choice to those
Who will not choose the best."**

THIRD STUDY. SPIRITUAL LIFE.

In our study of "Spiritual Heredity we have dealt with the beginnings of the evolution of spiritual life, and have seen that the environment of relationship to God is a necessary factor in the process. We are now to follow the further development of the soul life. We are to study the divine process of making full grown men and women from new-born souls.

Evolution as a process is in action all around us today in the making of a leaf or a flower from a bud; in making a bird on the wing from a life germ in the egg; in the making of far off worlds from star dust; in the making of men who are of the measure of the stature of Christ from new born spiritual children. Eph. 4:13-14.

What is Life? Spencer has said, "Life is continuous adjustment of inner relations to outer relations." Henry Churchill King says, "Life is correspondence to environment." These are not true definitions of what life is. They only state the conditions of active, evolving life. There is latent, passive life in the seed germ; in millions of seeds stored dry for the spring planting; but no adjustment to outer relations, no correspondence to environment. The spiritually unborn soul is alive, but not adjusted to divine relations; not responsive to divine environment. Jesus himself called this condition spiritual death. John 5:25. Death is separation, not annihilation. The father said

of the son who had gone into the far country, "This my son was dead." The Far Country is not a place. It is a state of mind and heart. It is lack of response to the divine environment—to the Father's love. Self separation from God is spiritual death. Oneness with God is spiritual life.

Spiritual life is not a created entity. It is of the very essence of the creator; of the Christ who said, "I am the Life." If we can define "God," we can define "Life." These terms are too great for definition.

Out of his own rich full nature Christ has this gift of spiritual life for man, for every man who will choose to take it. "The gift of God is eternal life. I am come that ye may have life."

But man may choose not only to be a spirit-born soul, a child of God. He may choose to be a full grown man in the spiritual kingdom. I am come, not only that you may have life, but that you may have it in abundance. John 10:10.

Abundant life in the plant and animal world comes through proper correspondence with favorable environment. Life and abundant life in the spiritual realm depend on certain conditions analogous to those that we find in physical life. Jesus constantly used the conditions of physical life and growth to make plain soul life and development. For full vigorous life and growth every plant and every animal must have air to breathe. Breath is necessary to the growing plant as to the living animal. The breath of life for the spirit of man is the Spirit of Truth promised by the Master as he was about to depart from the earth in his physical manifestation. Jesus ac-

counted the presence of the Holy Spirit of more value to man than his physical presence. He said, "It is better for you that I go away." He even promised that the Spirit of Truth should guide men into knowledge that he could not then reveal. John 16:12-13. Christ in the flesh was limited in *time* and *place*. Christ in the person of the Holy Spirit is in all times and all places, in every human heart in all the world, that has opened the door to him; and he is here to abide forever. He is here to do, through those who believe on him, greater works than he did in the flesh. John 14:12-18.

Every form of physical life depends upon water for its primal development and for its continued existence and growth. We find Jesus again and again using water as a symbol in relation to spiritual life and growth and out-go. Note his answer to the woman at the well. John 4:10. On the great day of the feast when the priests carried from the pool of Siloam the golden pitcher brimming with water to be poured out at the temple, Jesus stood and cried, "If any man thirst let him come to me and drink. He that believeth on me out of him shall flow rivers of living water." John 7:37-38.

The symbols used by Jesus to represent soul food are so rich and varied that we can only suggest a continued study of so wonderful a theme. "Give us this day our daily bread." Does any one suppose that Jesus thought only of bread for the body when he taught us to pray this prayer? "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." For Christ's most profound teachings concerning food and drink for the spirit of man read the great parables in John 6:26-59 and John 15:1-17.

For the hunger and thirst of the soul there is no satisfaction but in eating of the Living Bread and drinking of the fountain of Living Water.

Other essentials for normal development in the higher forms of plant and animal life are sunlight and heat. Note the vine that creeps into a dark cellar, how it loses color and strength and power for bearing blossom or fruit. Call to mind the blind fish in the Mammoth Cave and the pitiful pale children reared in cold dark tenement houses.

An old time prophet announced the coming Christ as "the Sun of Righteousness"; and how often the Master used the wonderful indefinable something that we call Light, to set forth his own character and mission. Enough that he said, "I am the Light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of Life." John 8:12.

But physical man needs for his best development not only the conditions we have named, but he needs exercise and rest. So of the spiritual man. "Jesus said, I must work the works of him that sent me." "As the Father hath sent me so send I you." There is no growing spiritual life without service, without work of some kind, and those who work must find rest. For rest there are two conditions, rest from labor and rest in labor. Jesus recognized that both are needful. To the tired disciples he said, "Come apart and rest a while." Mark 6:31. His ideal for rest in labor is beautifully pictured in the parable of the Yoke. Matt. 11:28-30. "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me and ye

shall find rest to your souls. My yoke is easy; my burden is light."

Many think of the yoke as a symbol of servitude, of bondage. It is in reality one of the finest symbols the Master ever used to set forth a spiritual truth. The yoke is a symbol of partnership in service and it may be so constructed that the stronger partner may take the larger share of the burden. My burden, the burden that you share with me and I share with you, is light, and ye shall find rest to your souls. Instead of fret and worry, of wear and tear in labor we shall find joy *in* our work and rest *in* our labor. So shall "the common deed of the common day" become a source of strength and not of weakness; of growth and not of decline.

We all know what wonders have been wrought by scientific methods in improving plants and animals. Man seems almost to have joined hands with the Creator in hastening the process of evolution. To work these wonders the man of science has imposed his own choice upon things that cannot choose for themselves. He chooses for each thing a better heredity, a more favorable environment, and decrees that the truly fit shall survive and the unfit shall die. He compels each thing to abide by its own divine law of life and growth and progress.

When man by his own choice for himself shall be careful to conform to divine law in all the essentials of life and growth; when he chooses for himself the divine heredity, the divine environment of relationship which is the continuous adjustment of the soul to God; when he decrees that by divine help the fittest in him shall survive and the unfit shall die daily, then the ideal of the full grown man shall be in process

of realization. To this end Christ offers to each human soul his own abundant Life, which is the Birth-right of every child of God.

FOURTH STUDY. SPIRITUAL DYNAMICS.

Dynamics is defined as the science of force. Force is any agency, latent or active, that can cause motion, arrest or change the direction of motion. In a larger sense force is any cause that can produce effect.

We speak of force as if it were something within the range of human comprehension. We try to define the word, yet we do not tell what force is. We only state what it can do. We are in the realm of mystery, of miracle, of the infinite, when we talk of force and of forces.

We see the daisy lift its head above the clod by a force that transcends gravitation, that mighty unseen power which holds uncounted worlds in their orbits. The transcendent force that lifts the daisy is life, and the mind of man stops in wonder before the works being done, day by day, by the undefined power that we call life.

We think of light and talk of it as if we knew. Light is a commonplace thing. But the astronomer will tell us that this invisible force that we call light has its own fixed laws; and because the man of science knows and obeys these laws, light obeys his will and has brought him word from a star-world so far away that the swift messenger was one hundred and thirty years on the journey, as it carried the message which tells the stuff of which the star is made, and the time limit of its orbital journey.

We think and talk of spiritual force as if we knew

the meaning of our own words. Yet we know that to comprehend this mystery requires a kind of knowledge that we do not now possess.

It gladdens us to know that man has eons of time for spiritual development and eternal years to study the secrets of the universe.

Within the limited range of what we know at present we find many things that may reward our quest toward the unknown.

We turn our thought first to the so-called natural forces, light, heat, electricity, gravitation, chemism and others almost without number, and we find that certain qualities are common to all. They are each and all invisible; we know them only by their effects. Each force outreaches the bounds of human thought as to quantity. Man cannot create nor destroy one unit of force. Each force has its own fixed, unchangeable laws. By knowledge of the laws of a force and conformity to these laws man may command the force for his own special purposes. For so utilizing the simplest natural force man must have a device for applying and directing the force; he must have a machine. A machine must be constructed in every minute part according to the laws of mechanics. Lever and pulley, wheel and axle, each part has its own fixed law.

One of the greatest modern discoveries of science is that all the so-called natural forces are different manifestations of one all-inclusive force. That each may be transformed into another force, but cannot be created nor destroyed by man. This is the great principle of the conservation of energy. In making this profound generalization, science stopped short at the

threshold of a yet greater truth, that all the forces of nature are different manifestations of "ONE OMNI-PRESENT DIVINE ENERGY OR WILL"; hence one with what religion has long since recognized as spiritual force, the out-go of the all sufficient Personality back of created things.

Our study of Spiritual Dynamics then must include all the natural forces as factors in this one primal all inclusive Force which is God.

Science in her great generalization of all natural forces as one force found no single law that would fit this inclusive force. Le Conte gave us the clue to such a law and coupled with it a new definition of Science. "The laws of nature are regular modes of operation of divine energy or will; invariable because he is unchangeable." "Science is systematic knowledge of divine thoughts and divine ways." Boutroux, a noted French philosopher, speaks of a time when we shall recognize "a science which shall embrace all knowledge, because it sees all things in God."

What then is the law of this one ultimate force that includes all natural forces, and also spiritual force? If all force is divine the law of all force must also be divine, must be spiritual. We seek spiritual law on the plane of the spiritual. Here is the one universal divine law, the keeping of which will bring man into harmony with the divine will, hence into harmony with divine power.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and thy neighbor as thyself."

Apply now the scientific principle that in order to utilize any force there must be conformity to the law of the force. Let science and religion join hands and

conform to this universal divine law wherever in all the world men touch the springs of human life, and the sources of production; and we shall see all the mighty forces of nature added to the spiritual forces now in action, for the advancement of human welfare, for the coming of the kingdom of God here on earth.

We have seen that any force of nature to be controlled by man must have a medium of manifestation, a mechanism made conformable to law. What is the mechanism through which spiritual power may manifest itself here on earth? We touch here one of the most wonderful truths of Christ's teachings. Man is the medium, the mechanism through which divine power may manifest itself for the bringing in of the kingdom of God here and now.

If the medium through which physical force is to be utilized must be made conformable to law and kept in order to avoid friction and limitation of power, what of the mechanism through which spiritual power may manifest itself? Here is a challenge for efficiency.

Man's body is the most perfect piece of machinery ever made. It is man's duty as a child of God to keep this part of himself in order, that it may help and not hinder the divine Spirit which seeks it as a medium of work in the world. This may be done by knowing and obeying the laws of physical life, laws as truly divine and imperative as any other laws of God.

So of the mind. Here again we are in the domain of law. Who shall estimate or set bounds to the power of the mind of one man, developed and used in harmony with divine law and yielded to the Spirit of Truth which is promised to guide into all truth?

Of spiritual media through which the power of God may be manifested Paul singles out faith, hope and love. The promises made to faith alone stagger us by their greatness; and as for love, read I Corinthians 13 and Eph. 3:14-21, and stand in awe.

If there is limitation of power in the physical realm, it is on the side of the mechanism and not of the force. Electricity cannot light a million homes, cannot turn uncounted wheels, cannot speak through the air, cannot do any of its wonderful works in the world without the various forms of mechanism through which it is today manifesting its power. Man may limit this force by failing to supply proper media for its expression. He may *enable* it to do mighty works by conforming to its laws.

If there is limitation of power in the spiritual realm it is on the side of the human mechanism and not of the Power. The Power is unlimited. It is said of the children of Israel because of their failure at Kadesh-Barnea, that "they limited the Holy One of Israel." Ps. 78:41. Jesus himself could not in his own land do many mighty works because of the unbelief of the people who saw in him only the carpenter's son. Matt. 13:55-58.

As man may *limit* God by failing to supply the medium for the divine power which is ever at hand, so he may *enable* the Holy One to do his wonderful works in the world, by conforming to divine law. As there are unexplored resources of power in every natural force, so there are unexplored resources of power in God, for help in all the right purposes of life—for hastening the coming of the kingdom. Acts 1:8.

FIFTH STUDY.

SPIRITUAL GRAVITATION.

Early in the Seventeenth century Galileo startled the religious world by his discovery that the earth is not the center of the universe, but that it moves about the sun. The discoverer came near losing his life for his bold assertion. Later in the same century came the even more startling discovery by Newton of the law of gravitation.

Voltaire openly advocated Newton's views, thinking that he had now found an unanswerable argument that would banish God from the course of nature.

Today many of our greatest astronomers and other men of science regard the conception of one force pervading infinite space, and one law guiding unnumbered worlds in their orbits, as the strongest proof of the imminence of God. Truly the heavens declare the glory of God.

It was surely a daring generalization on which Newton announced this great law,—*"Any two particles of matter attract each other with a force which is proportionate to their masses and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them."* Shall we find that this force of gravitation and the law from which it never varies by a hair's breadth can teach us valuable lessons of spiritual life?

Two bodies, as the earth and the sun, have each an attraction for the other, and somewhere between the two is a point or line of equilibrium between the two forces. Note that this is only a point or line, and that every particle of matter between the earth and the sun must be on one side or the other of this invisible line, hence more strongly attracted to one body than to the other.

For man there are but two centers of attraction and two motive powers which determine his direction of movement, his actions, his character. The one center of attraction is God. The other center is self. One motive power is love. The other is selfishness. Love is the source of all the good in the world. Selfishness is the source of all the evil in the world.

God as a center is drawing every man to himself by the persuasive power of a perfect ideal and the attractive force of love. At the same time every man is being drawn towards the self-center by the urge of his own lower nature and in obedience to the law of selfishness.

Here again we find man's royal privilege of choice. He may and must choose his center of gravitation, shall it be God, or shall it be self? He must choose the law of his life. Shall it be love or shall it be selfishness? Here is a test by which we may know, by what a man is, which of these motives is the law of his life. Love seeks the highest good of its object, without regard to the gratification of the lower self. Selfishness seeks gratification of the lower self without regard to the good of its object, be that object self, or neighbor, or God.

Again we turn to the great law of the kingdom as our standard: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and thy neighbor as thyself." Usually we think of only two objectives as named in this law, God and the neighbor; but we lose the true meaning of the law if we fail to include the third objective, "Self." We are speaking now, not of an emotion which may call itself by the holy name of

love. We are speaking of love which is of the very nature of God. Love of self is as far removed from selfishness as the east is from the west.

Apply now our test, beginning with self. The man who loves himself seeks his own highest good without regard to the gratification of his own lower self. This gives him the only true standard for loving his neighbor. If he love his neighbor *as himself* he will seek the neighbor's highest good without regard to the gratification of himself. If he love God he will seek the highest that God seeks; and if he love himself he must love God, for that is his own highest good.

Having chosen his life center, either God or self, and having made the law of his life either love or selfishness, we find every man on the God side or on the self side of the line of equilibrium between the two centers, God and self, good and evil.

We have learned from our own observation and experience that every man is himself a force of gravitation. This is in harmony with the physical law, every particle attracts every other particle. Here we find the glory and the pathos of life. Every man as a gravity force is attracting men toward God or toward the great mass of selfishness which is on every hand. He is adding to the attractive power of God his own attractive force, or he is adding to the attractive forces of evil in the world.

And he must do this whether he deliberately plans it or not. He makes his choice when he chooses his life center, self or God. It is not by his words that a man is the greatest attractive force for good or evil. *It is by what he is.* "What you are thunders so loud I cannot hear what you say."

Men pass the line of equilibrium between self and God at the new birth, but some keep dangerously near the line even after they are new born. John was the "Beloved Disciple" because he chose his place nearest to the heart of the Master; and what a drawing power he is in the world today.

Of Jesus Christ as a drawing power Napoleon at St. Helena gave this testimony: "I and Alexander founded empires on force. Today I am an exile and no man does my bidding; and where is the empire of Alexander? Jesus Christ founded an empire on love and he alone has succeeded in so raising men to the unseen that they become insensible to barriers of *time* and *space*. Across the chasm of eighteen hundred years Jesus Christ makes a demand, which of all others, is difficult to satisfy. He demands the human heart, and today millions of men would die for him. This it is that proves to me quite conclusively the divinity of Jesus Christ."

SIXTH STUDY. THE SPIRITUAL KINGDOM.

In our first study we have said that one great purpose of the Christ in coming to the earth as Jesus of Nazareth was to establish here and now a spiritual kingdom in which the will of God shall be done as it is done in heaven. Our five studies already given have steadily kept this end in view.

Prophets and sages of old had seen in vision a kingdom of God which had these signs:

"His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom." Dan. 4:3. "A kingdom of glorious majesty." Ps. 145:12. "A kingdom that ruleth over all." Ps. 103:19. "Of

the increase of his kingdom and peace there shall be no end." Is. 9:6-7.

At the beginning of his public ministry, "Jesus went about all Galilee, preaching the good tidings of the kingdom." Matt. 4:23. He sent out the twelve with one message, "As ye go preach, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matt. 10:7. He gave the same word to be spoken by the seventy whom he sent out later.

Our Lord's teachings, especially his many parables, centered largely in the thought of the kingdom. He taught men to pray, "Thy kingdom come." In those wonderful forty days after his resurrection when he appeared to many, but especially to his chosen disciples, he was "Speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God." Acts 1:3.

So from the far off days of the prophets down to our own day people have been thinking and talking about "A Kingdom of God." Many different ideas have been held concerning this kingdom. The Jews thought it was to be a temporal kingdom with a king of mighty power on the throne of David. When Jesus fed the multitude on the shores of the Sea of Galilee they thought he must surely be the promised one, and sought by force to make him a king.

The disciples held to this view concerning Jesus. On the day of his resurrection the two who walked to Emmaus and saw the Lord but knew him not, said, "We hoped that it was he who should redeem Israel." Luke 24:21. Just before the Master's ascension the disciples asked, "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" Acts. 1:6.

In all the Christian ages many believers in Christ

have thought that the kingdom of heaven is *in heaven* and that believers will come into the kingdom only after death.

The belief current in many minds today is that the kingdom will not come on earth until Christ returns in bodily form to dwell among men.

What was Christ's idea of the kingdom? Although it had been announced again and again, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," still the people were in doubt. The Pharisees asked him when the kingdom of God cometh and he gave in one short sentence the time and place and character of the kingdom. "The kingdom of God cometh not with outward show, neither shall ye say, 'Look here!' or 'Look there!' for lo, the kingdom of God is within you; or, in your midst."

Christ's most perfect word description of the character of the kingdom is in the prayer he taught men to pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." Paul's great definition of the kingdom is in Rom. 14:17, "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

Jesus seems almost to go beyond the power of language in setting before his hearers in plain word and in parable what the kingdom is like. The shortest and most wonderful of these parables we find in Matt. 13:33, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened." No one on earth, except Jesus himself, knew at that time the nature of leaven. That is a recent discovery of science, a discovery that waited for the microscope. Leaven is life and growth. It is a plant which forms buds and

each bud breaks off and forms a new plant. And these countless microscopic plants assimilate the lifeless mass of meal, particle by particle, and vitalize it; and the growth continues till the last particle is reached and made alive,—till the whole is leavened. The kingdom is like leaven.

The truth of the kingdom growing as a living thing is beautifully set forth in the parable of the seed growing while men sleep, yielding first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. Mark 4:26-28, also in the parable of the mustard seed. Mark. 4:30-32.

Through the life of God in man, as so wonderfully set forth in the parable of the vine and the branches, not only is each life to be transformed into the likeness of Christ, but human society in all its varied activities is to be transformed. Dr. James A. Francis gives us this illuminating definition of the kingdom, "Human society in this world transformed by the Spirit of God till it becomes a copy of society around the throne."

Science with its manifold discoveries and inventions has made the whole earth one neighborhood. The leaven of spiritual life in Christ is to make the whole world one brotherhood. In the kingdom of God each citizen is "a child of the king," hence all are brothers.

The most far-reaching, the most stupendous, the most seemingly impossible thing ever undertaken on this earth is the establishing of this kingdom of God among men. We stand in awe before the task and readily admit, "With men it is impossible." But we turn with joy to the Master's added word, "All things are possible with God." Mark 10:27.

Never before have the forces of good and evil been so fiercely arrayed against each other as today. Many in the past have regarded religion as a thing apart from the work-a-day world; as something for Sunday; for churches and Sunday Schools; good for women and small children. Men have been playing at the game of fighting evil:—fighting it by snatches; fighting it in patches; fighting it by man-made devices. Today the world is awaking to see that the fight is on at its fiercest; that all the forces of good,—that the great army of God must be set in array along the whole line of battle and that only by the aid of divine Power can the victory be won. Paul clothed his Christian warrior in armor. We have been wearing soft raiment and abiding in palaces. Meanwhile the forces of evil have seized upon and turned to their own selfish and fiendish purposes the natural resources of the earth and all the mighty forces of nature. These must be captured from the enemy and made to serve all men; made to serve for the bringing in of the kingdom of God in all the earth.

The one law of the kingdom is the law of love. Jesus had given it again and again, but in the upper room he gave it as a new commendment and added this test, "That ye love one another even as I have loved you." Study this divine love in its sacrificial pouring out of life itself. This is study for a lifetime.

In this divine love in action we find cure for all the evils of the world. And this cure is to be wrought by divine love and power manifested in and through human agencies, through men who are heirs of God

7-12-10
through spiritual birth; through men who are responsive to divine environment; who by the help of the indwelling Christ are choosing that in them the fit shall survive and the unfit shall die; men who have accepted Christ's offered gift of abundant life; men who are so in harmony with divine law that infinite power can be manifested in and through them for the mighty tasks; men who through what they are, and what they do as the out-go of the life of God in them, are attracting the world away from the self-center toward the true center, which is God; men who, whatever their occupation for daily bread seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Through such agencies the prayer which Jesus taught men to pray is being answered and we see in vision the dawn of the New Day when the kingdoms of the world shall have become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ; AND HE, THE KING ETERNAL, IMMORTAL, INVISIBLE, SHALL PRESIDE AS PRINCE OF PEACE IN THE PARLIAMENT OF MAN, THE FEDERATION OF THE WORLD.

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